



HILLTOP I & II REINVESTMENT AREA REPORT & ACTION PLAN

Winter - Spring 1994

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HILLTOP I & II REINVESTMENT AREA

Earlier this winter individuals living, working, or owning property in or near the Hilltop Reinvestment Areas met to take a good look at their neighborhood as it is now and then to imagine its future. Despite record cold temperatures and snowfall, over fifty people participated in a series of three Saturday workshops and several smaller task force group sessions. Community members met with each other, city staff, and individuals with a variety of professional expertise, to develop activities that will positively affect their community.

This report serves as a document and collective memory of what took place from January through March of 1992, in a small portion of the Greater Hilltop Area. Equally important, it contains a prioritized list of activities that participants hope will foster new partnerships for getting things done in the community, as well as strengthen partnerships already working to make the Hilltop a good place to work and call home.

Hilltop I & II, located in the eastern most portion of the Greater Hilltop, are two of six community reinvestment areas designated in Columbus' older city neighborhoods. The other reinvestment areas selected for the period of 1992 through 1996 are South of Main, Windsor Terrace, Italian Village, and Southwood. They were selected using criteria developed by the Mayor's Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee in 1993. Through the reinvestment program, the city is making a firm commitment to a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down" approach to neighborhood revitalization.

Planning for Hilltop I & II has been combined into one process. However, some implementation activities will be staged, beginning this summer in Hilltop I and 1996 in Hilltop II. The planning area is roughly bounded on the north by West Broad Street, on the south by Sullivant Avenue, on the West by Wheatland Avenue to the intersection of Palmetto, and on the east by Columbian Avenue.

According to the 1990 Census, approximately 3,370 people live in the combined Hilltop I & II reinvestment areas. The population distribution in Hilltop I & II shows the planning area to be racially integrated, with 57% of the population white and 23% African American. Average household income is \$21,736, compared to the city average of \$31,860. Nearly one-half of the approximately 1,287 housing units in Hilltop I & II were built before 1939. Of the total number of housing units, 38.7% are owner occupied and 50% are renter occupied. This is close to the city averages of 33% owner occupied and 49% renter occupied.

Hilltop I & II have a lot to offer. The planning area is part of a larger community of affordable, attractive, well built homes, within close proximity to a number of city parks, easy access to downtown and the city's network of interstates. Many area residents are actively involved in civic, business, and social activities.

In fact, residents of the Glenwood Heights subdivision, located in the planning area, have been meeting over the last year. They have organized neighborhood "clean-ups" and picnics, and have negotiated a number of community improvements with the city using funds targeted to older city areas. A good deal has been accomplished over the past year and during the reinvestment workshops — but things are not as good as they could be.

Individuals on the Hilltop know this and they've taken the time to imagine their neighborhood's future. Revitalization activities have started and their success will depend on what the community makes of it.

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS

1994 - 1996

Announced in the Fall of 1993, the Community Reinvestment Program signaled a new approach to community reinvestment efforts in Columbus. It started as a pilot program with six of Columbus's central city neighborhoods. Initiated by the Development Department, the program is different from earlier revitalization efforts. Instead of focusing on single issues, problems, or programs, the city has forged partnerships with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to develop long-range plans that communicate each neighborhood's goals and priority activities for getting things done.

NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT: THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

The Community Reinvestment Program is one of the city's responses to recommendations made by a Low-Income Neighborhood Advisory Panel of The Urban Land Institute (ULI). In March 1992, the ULI panel visited Columbus to examine our local situation and offer recommendations to improve the delivery of housing and neighborhood revitalization.

Sponsored by the local ULI Chapter and various business and development interests, the panel examined background information, toured three study neighborhoods, and interviewed over 100 representatives of Columbus neighborhoods, financial institutions, development organizations and city government. The panel concluded its public inquiry with a presentation of its findings. These recommendations included a statement on the need to clarify public policies addressing affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization.

The Panel also advised that neighborhood revitalization activities be based on comprehensive, holistic, neighborhood plans. The plans should include a definition of neighborhood boundaries that work, thus enabling resources to be concentrated in an area small enough to make an impact, yet large enough to be significant. Overall two things were stressed: to meaningfully have an impact, revitalization efforts must provide for resident and stakeholder participation at every step of the process and be able to build upon an area's strengths and successes.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Rather than trying to "fit" neighborhoods into particular city programs, the reinvestment plans, goals, and implementation strategies will be tailored to reflect each area's priorities and community vision. This reflects a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down," approach to neighborhood revitalization efforts.

As mentioned earlier, area residents and stakeholders will direct city activities in their neighborhoods and be responsible for negotiating agreed upon community goals and action strategies. It is likely that new ideas will emerge during the planning process; if they are to become a reality, new partnerships will need to be forged. The city will make a three year commitment of staff and resources to each of the community reinvestment areas. However, successful revitalization efforts will need a variety of planning and implementing partnerships involving the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and most importantly, area residents.

REINVESTMENT AREAS AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION POLICY

In response to the ULI challenge to clarify the city's affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization policies, Mayor Gregory S. Lashutka convened the Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee (HNDC) in March 1993. Comprised of city officials, neighborhood leaders, community service providers, and representatives of the development community, this group drafted policies and strategies reflective of all housing and neighborhood interests. The policies will serve as the city's statement on the delivery of housing assistance and the revitalization of Columbus neighborhoods.

Additionally, the HNDC developed reinvestment area selection criteria. The criteria contain several broad themes, as follows: residential and stakeholder involvement, community based

planning, holistic programs, small areas to maximize impact, and signs of decay and distress. The committee also advised that the city give priority consideration to areas that have a history and a culture—that were once vital, and are now demonstrating the desire to regain their earlier vitality.

The six reinvestment areas were selected using this criteria. Most of the reinvestment areas are smaller sub-neighborhoods of existing community planning areas. They are referred to here as South of Main, Hilltop I & II, Windsor Terrace, Southwood, and Italian Village.

Each of the reinvestment areas have at least one “solid” border to build from. In some instances, the border is an interstate highway or industrial location that separates the neighborhood from other areas of decay and distress. In others, a stable neighborhood serves as the base from which to address revitalization activities. Other common strengths include active development organizations, other development activity underway that the program can build upon, strong resident participation and organization, affordable housing stock, and committed local institutions.

Planning and implementation activities have begun simultaneously in the 1992 designated reinvestment areas of South of Main and Hilltop. Hilltop I & II have been combined for planning purposes and some implementation activities will be staged to occur in 1992, while other activities will take place in 1996. The annual designations correlate with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) yearly funding cycles.

Planning activities will precede the expenditure of CDBG funds set aside for reinvestment designated activities. Upon completion of the Hilltop and South of Main planning efforts, the remaining reinvestment areas will be phased in one at a time, as each preceding area completes a six month planning process.

The Development Department’s Planning Division will lead the planning phase in partnership with the Neighborhood Development Division. The Neighborhood Development Division will coordinate and lead the three year implementation phase of each of the reinvestment area plans.

HILLTOP REINVESTMENT AREA HISTORY

The Hilltop community reinvestment area has had a long and interesting history characterized by change. The neighborhood is located on the west side of Columbus, Ohio in the eastern-most section of the Greater Hilltop planning area. The reinvestment planning area is roughly bounded on the north by West Broad Street, on the south by Sullivant Avenue, on the west by Wheatland Avenue to the intersection of Palmetto, and on the east by Columbian Avenue. The first people to live in the region were Indian mound-building tribes. After the Revolutionary War, land west of the Scioto River was given to American military officers by Congress as a form of compensation. The first settler, Lucas Sullivant, was a surveyor from Louisville, Kentucky who arrived in 1795 to survey and claim land for a Virginia officer. Sullivant received part of the surveyed land as payment for his services. He chose to settle in what is now known as Franklinton. He gave 1600 acres of land located further west to his sons, William and Michael Sullivant, who became the first landowners in the area known today as the Hilltop. Over the years, Lucas Sullivant continued to distribute land to his sons — William, Michael, and Joseph — as well as other heirs in more than 200 transactions.

The Hilltop began to grow as Columbus became more developed. In 1856, there were 35 families on the Hilltop; by 1872, the number of families had grown to 83. Except for several institutions, the Hilltop was a rural community whose residents depended on farming for their subsistence. National Road (Broad Street) was built through the Hilltop in 1836. Toll gates were located at Midland Avenue and later moved to Wheatland Avenue in the reinvestment area. In 1862, the Four-Mile House was built along the National Road between Roys and Chase avenues. It served as a tavern and inn for soldiers and travelers until it was razed in 1913. By 1860, there were two railroads through the Hilltop which attracted workers who were machinists and conductors. In 1861, Camp Chase Union Military Training Camp was established in the area and covered over 160 acres; it was the largest Civil War prisoner camp in the North. The camp extended westward from Hague Avenue and stretched between West Broad Street and Sullivant Avenue. It was named for Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase. In 1865, the camp was closed, and the land was auctioned to the public and sold to Quaker farmers.

A significant development in the Hilltop was the location of the State Lands in the reinvestment area. The Asylum for Imbecile and Idiotic Youth (once known as the Columbus State Institute and now the Columbus Development Center) was built in 1868 on 187 acres of land south of West Broad Street. In 1870, the Central Ohio Lunatic Asylum (known as the State Hospital and now the Central Ohio Psychiatric Hospital) was constructed on 307 acres of land north of West Broad Street. By 1870, there were over 50 people employed by the two institutions. Businesses developed around the State Lands in the reinvestment area. These businesses included: Jones & Co., a brick manufacturing plant encompassing 33 acres south of Broad Street to Sullivant Avenue between Whitethorne and Belvidere Avenues; Kramer's Boarding House across from the State Hospital; and an office building for the hospital administration board on the north side of Broad Street near Midland Avenue. Many of the hospitals' doctors, administrators, and employees built homes in the reinvestment area with a large number constructed on Fairmont and Floral avenues.

Even though Columbus was rapidly growing, the Hilltop and the city were relatively isolated from each other. The community looked to the neighborhood for social and religious activities. It was common to visit families as well as attend socials, box suppers, parties, and dances. After the development of the State Lands, many residents would utilize the grounds as parks by picnicking and playing on the open lawns of the institutions as well as ice skating on Asylum Lake in the winter.

Between 1885 and 1895, the Hilltop began to evolve from a rural community into an urban setting as farms were subdivided and sold. A large section of the older area in the Hilltop was platted and sold during the 1890's to the early 1900's. One of the first large land owners in the reinvestment area was the Thomas family who owned the land between Broad Street and Sullivant Avenue

from the State Hospital to Ogden Avenue. The first street paved in the Hilltop was Broad Street followed by Highland Avenue. Some of the earlier streets in the reinvestment area such as Price Street (now Clarendon Avenue), Hawthorne (now Whitethorne Avenue), and Maple Street (now Wheatland Avenue) were not paved until 1905. The first street car to the Hilltop ran from High Street to the State Hospital in the early 1890's. Later, the street car was expanded to include Highland Avenue and then Hague Avenue.

As development continued, many of the Hilltop's first businesses were located in or adjacent to the reinvestment area. By the early 1900's, several businesses had already been established between Wheatland and Oakley avenues. The first business, in the Hilltop as well as in the reinvestment area, was a grocery store and meat market. It was started in 1883 and was located on the corner of Wheatland Avenue and Broad Street. Another early business in the reinvestment area was Samuel Six's Grocery Store located on the southwest corner of Highland Avenue and Broad Street. W.W. Six operated the store from 1893 to 1938. When the store first opened, it was only a feed store with groceries being added later. Six's grocery store was a popular place for students from nearby Highland Avenue Elementary School when it was built in 1895. South of these early businesses was the first significant subdivision of the reinvestment area. The subdivision was called Ong's Maple Grove Addition and was platted in 1897. Another early section developed in the reinvestment area was the land south of Ong Avenue between Belvidere and Wheatland avenues. This area was settled by many African-American families during the 1920's and 1930's.

By 1900, there were over 2,000 residents in the Hilltop. Many of the people had migrated from Virginia and Pennsylvania as well as Wales, England, and Germany. Common occupations of the community members included laborer, carpenter, and machinist. The first decade of the 20th century was marked by continued growth evident by many newly constructed homes and businesses. Two of the more popular architectural styles on the Hilltop were from the Utilitarian/Craftsman Movement called the Four-Square and the Bungalow.

The first school was located in the reinvestment area on the corner of Highland Avenue and Broad Street. It was originally organized to educate the children of the military officers from Camp Chase; and when the camp closed, it became a public school in 1865. The second school in the Hilltop, also in the reinvestment area, was started in the old Thomas farmhouse on Price Avenue (now Clarendon Avenue) in 1869. Later, the two schools were merged into a new brick school on 129 Clarendon Avenue. The new building doubled as a church and was used by the Friends Church and later the Glenwood Methodist Church. The building still exists today as a private residence at 137 Clarendon Avenue. In 1895, the Highland Avenue School opened in the reinvestment area due to the population growth demands of the neighborhood.

The first fire house in the Hilltop, No. 1 Chemical House, was in the reinvestment area at the corner of Whitethorne Avenue and Broad Street in an old frame barn in 1897. It was manned by African-American fire fighters and consisted of a double 80 gallon chemical wagon with two horses. In 1913, it was replaced by a new fire station called Engine House No. 17. The building was used as a morgue after the flood of 1913. Engine House No. 17 was recently replaced by a new building adjacent to the old one in 1992.

In the Hilltop, as in many communities, churches served religious as well as social functions. The first church, in the Hilltop as well as in the reinvestment area, was called Highland Avenue Friends Church. The first services were held by William P. Ong in 1889 at the corner of Broad Street and Whitethorne Avenue. Ong directed the building of the church at Highland Avenue and Floral Street in 1893. The church members originally called themselves the Maple Grove Friends Meeting. The Glenwood Methodist Church (now the Oakley Avenue Baptist building) also originated in the reinvestment area. The first services were held in 1893 at Samuel Six's home, and the church was later moved to 129 Clarendon Avenue into a rented school building. They stayed briefly on Highland Avenue in a frame structure before a new brick church was built in 1910. The first Catholic church in Hilltop was built in the reinvestment area. St. Aloysius was

constructed in 1906 and was headed by Father J.J. Calahan. The building consisted of a church, school, and rectory.

In 1913, Columbus experienced one of the most devastating floods in history. Fortunately, the Hilltop was not seriously affected by the water due to its higher elevation. Flood victims were housed in Hilltop's churches, schools, and homes as well as the State Hospital. After the flood, many people moved to the Hilltop because of its advantageous location; thus, there was a commercial and residential development boom between 1913 and 1925. By 1920, the Hilltop population had grown to 15,000. It was at this time that the Hilltop considered itself its own city because the community had its own schools, churches, businesses, fire-hall, social clubs, and even two newspapers (The Hilltop Weekly News in 1917 and The Hilltop Record in 1917). Many local associations and activities were created between 1910 and 1920. The first community service organization in the area was the Hilltop Improvement Association. It was responsible for the establishment of Glenwood Park in 1911. The association also sponsored the "Hilltop Outing" at Buckeye Lake and "Hilltop Chautauqua" (a summer concert event) in the 1920's. In 1926, the Hilltop Improvement Association was changed to the Hilltop Business Association because of the neighborhood's rapid rate of commercial growth.

By 1927, West Broad Street in the Hilltop had over fifty businesses established. The reinvestment area's Henderson Block, located on Broad Street at Highland Avenue, was developed between 1922 and 1923. To meet the demands of the growing population, Highland Avenue School was temporarily converted into a junior high in 1921; thus, West Junior High was in operation until 1929 when West High School was finally completed. Cecil J. Randall, from 1989 West Broad Street, was instrumental in establishing West High School. He was also president of the Columbus School Board as well as Franklin County's Common Pleas Judge for twenty years.

In spite of the Great Depression, development on the Hilltop managed to continue into the 1930's due to the creation of public works projects by the federal government. The community had a "small town" atmosphere where everyone seemed to know each other. Between 1920 and 1970, there were many social and cultural activities in the Hilltop. Two popular events that originated in the early 1930's were the popular Bean Dinner and the annual Hilltop Minstrel Show. Both events were sponsored by the Hilltop Business Association.

Growth slowed during the 1940's due to World War II and began to increase again during the 1950's as the soldiers came home. West Broad Street was already experiencing traffic congestion by the early 1940's. In 1946, the General Motors plant opened on Georgesville Road. The Hilltop Community Council was formed in 1947 by representatives from local organizations, churches, and schools to serve as a neighborhood betterment organization. They sponsored the Memorial Day and Christmas parades as well as the Christmas tree lighting ceremony on the State Hospital grounds in the reinvestment area. Beginning in the 1940's and lasting through the 1960's, the Hilltop developed a strong political influence in Columbus; three Hilltoppers served as mayor in Columbus and included: Floyd F. Green (1940-1943), Maynard E. "Jack" Sensenbrenner (1957-1959 and 1967-1971), and W. Ralston Westlake (1959-1963).

Over the years, the reinvestment area has been home to many businesses. Some of these businesses have included feed stores, grocery stores, restaurants, confectioneries, fruit and vegetable markets, bakeries, physician and dentist offices, plumbing companies, and tire shops. Because of the competition with the new suburban malls and shopping centers, many of the local businesses began to close in the 1960's along West Broad Street and Sullivant Avenue. The Hilltop population continued to grow, but the community became diverse and drifted apart. The neighborhood residents and organizations during the 1960's and 1970's could best be described as having lost direction. The physical condition of the once booming area was already beginning to show signs of decline. Fortunately by the 1980's, community efforts were being made to revitalize the area. The Greater Hilltop Area Commission and the Greater Hilltop Community Development Corporation were established to redirect the neighborhood, and the Hilltop Business Association became re-involved with the community. Recently, community leaders and

residents have met with the City of Columbus Planning Division to develop a comprehensive plan for the Greater Hilltop planning area. The plan is currently being written and will be presented to the residents during 1992 for discussion. Another significant development in the neighborhood is the recent availability of the State Lands for future re-development because of the closing and moving of the institutions. The redevelopment of the State Lands could have a significant impact on the reinvestment area and the Hilltop because the tract contains a vast amount of land suitable for development as well as a key location close to the expressway and downtown Columbus.

In conclusion, the Hilltop reinvestment area is a vital older city neighborhood which contains distinctive features and characteristics worth saving and redeveloping. Over the years, the community has been able to preserve its own identity apart from the city of Columbus. Today, the neighborhood is still affectionately known as home by many Hilltoppers and is held with pride.

SOURCES

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GETTING STARTED IN THE HILLTOP

The planning program for the community reinvestment areas has been designed to encourage resident and stakeholder participation in decision making that will affect their neighborhood. Community members are encouraged to take a good look at their neighborhood and then identify activities that will bring about desired changes. It is a goal of this process to build confidence that citizens can make happen what they've planned to have happen.

To get things started in the Hilltop planning area, a preliminary community meeting was held with local leaders, including members of civic groups, the Greater Hilltop Area Commission, business organizations, churches, social service providers, and the schools. The meeting was called to take care of "nuts and bolts" issues, such as where and when to hold the workshops, as well as to decide the best way to inform the community about the workshops.

Several smaller working committees were established and members of the organizational committee met November through January to prepare for the workshops. A theme was created, "THE HILLTOP...JUST IMAG!NE" and members of the organizational committee worked hard to get the word out to planning area residents, property owners, and businesses.

Posters were created, handbills distributed, and letters mailed to area property owners. The local newspapers featured articles on the upcoming workshops, highlighted by a series of "JUST IMAG!NE" features in the Westside Messenger, that presented potential workshop discussion topics.

A series of three Saturday workshops, one per month, was scheduled to take place at the Glenwood Recreation Center. Each workshop focused on a specific topic. At the first workshop, participants were asked to identify the priority concerns and issues in their neighborhood. The second workshop provided an opportunity to better define and clarify these issues and focus on resources available to help formulate solutions. In addition, smaller task force groups were also created, so that community members could continue their work and develop activities for consideration by all participants at the third workshop. At the third and final workshop, task force reports were made and participants voted to rank, in order of highest priority, the activities listed.

What follows is a summary of the Hilltop workshops.

WORKSHOP 1: ISSUES AND ASSETS

The first workshop was organized into a series of discussion groups. Participants were asked to sit at small tables of eight to ten people. Each table had a city staff person serving as a facilitator. The facilitator's role was to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to share their ideas and then record those ideas on a flip chart.

Discussion centered around two questions that were used to identify neighborhood strengths and problems. The questions were as follows:

- 1) What do you like about your neighborhood and want to keep?
- 2) What don't you like about your neighborhood and want to change?

Participants responded to the above questions in two separate discussion rounds. At the end of the second round, each table reported their responses back to the full group. The responses were recorded and after all of the reports were made, participants ranked the issues by voting with dots to indicate what they felt were the highest priority concerns of the neighborhood.

Three task force groups were created at the end of the meeting. The first group was charged with exploring and reporting on the neighborhood's past and recent history. The second group served as the workshop "memory," summarizing the issues reported and the results of the priority vote. And last, a housing rehabilitation group was formed to discuss residential rehabilitation needs and available programs.

- **What Happened in the Hilltop...**

The first workshop was well attended by a particularly hardy and curious group of community members who braved a recent snow storm and record-setting cold temperatures. Held on January 22, 1992, at the Glenwood Recreation Center, the workshop attracted approximately 50 participants.

The meeting began with an overview of the reinvestment area program, its goals, and objectives. This was followed by a period of questions and discussion about what all of this might mean to the Hilltop. Participants reviewed the proposed program boundaries and there was some interest expressed in extending the boundaries further west and south to incorporate all of Wheatland Avenue.

The pros and cons of this idea were discussed. Those in support felt that the western boundary, as proposed, lacked a sense of neighborhood due to its odd “flag” shaped configuration. They also felt that it bore little relationship to what residents actually perceive as their neighborhood.

On the other hand, community members voiced their concern that extending the boundaries would stretch limited resources too far, resulting in no noticeable effort. They suggested maintaining the current boundaries, working together to make an impact and advocating for the area between Whitethorne and Wheatland avenues to be designated a future reinvestment area. The existing boundaries were maintained with the understanding that some improvements, such as social services and safety, would benefit the broader community.

The workshop then broke up into small discussion groups with participants talking about what they did and did not like about their neighborhood. Individuals were very enthusiastic about the architectural character and historic quality of the neighborhood and the streets with older, mature trees. There was a lot of agreement that this is a community of good neighbors with strong civic spirit and a concern for the welfare of others. In addition, there is a good age, race, and ethnic mix of persons living and working in the planning area. Easy access to downtown, hospitals, freeways, and shopping centers was felt to be another plus. Participants also identified the new fire station and improvements to Glenwood Recreation Center as things that they liked.

Just as there was a lot of agreement on the things that people liked about the neighborhood there was also a good amount of consensus on what needs to be changed. Safety concerns topped the list and were joined by such problems as poor code enforcement, neglected properties, “undesirable businesses,” poor alley condition, the 300 gallon system of trash collection, and the need for more recreation and enrichment programs for area youths.

After all the group reports were made, participants voted with “dots” to identify their priority concerns. The meeting concluded with box lunches, catered by the North Broadway United Methodist Church and funded by the Urban Bankers Group, a consortium of twelve Columbus lending institutions.

WORKSHOP 2: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

The second workshop focused on producing a detailed definition of the problems previously identified, so that potential solutions could be developed. Attention was also given to the range of resources available to lead the group toward feasible and realistic solutions. Task force reports that outlined neighborhood history, discussed housing rehabilitation needs, and summarized the proceedings of the first workshop, were the first order of business.

After the reports were made, participants were asked to sit in small discussion groups, but this time they were able to pick their group based on the issues they wanted to talk about. Assisting each group was a facilitator and resource leader (business person, city official, social service, or organizational representative). The resource leader was asked to use their expertise to help

residents identify in a detailed way, the problem and who they should get to help with possible solutions. Problem definition and ideas were generated around the following:

- What is our goal?
- What is the problem?
- Who is doing something now?
- What can be done that has not been done before?
- Who can help that is not helping now?

At the end of the meeting, new task forces were formed to continue the work of the discussion groups. They gathered additional information about the problem, met with resources to get their ideas and help, and developed activities and implementation responsibilities.

• **What Happened in the Hilltop...**

The second workshop was held on February 26th at the Glenwood Recreation Center. Once again the weather tested everyone's resolve and a thick coating of ice created the illusion of "Columbus under glass." The meeting began with an overview of the neighborhood's history presented by Earl Potts, with the assistance of Shannon McCartt, a graduate student intern with the Greater Hilltop Area Commission. This was followed by a report by the Housing Rehabilitation group which was delivered by Alina Butler. Mary Arensberg refreshed everyone's memory on the proceedings at the first meeting and took the group through a detailed summary of the results of the priority vote. Items identified as problems at the first meeting were organized into six categories. The categories were used to organize the discussion groups as follows: Safety; Social Services; Regulations and Code Enforcement; Business; City Services; and Housing Opportunities.

Participants were able to join more than one group and by the end of the workshop, a lot of newsprint was up on the walls showing each committee's work. The discussions continued through another lunch provided by the Urban Bankers Group. Many of the participants went around the room reviewing each group's work, adding additional ideas, and signing up for future task force groups.

WORKSHOP 3: PLANNING FOR ACTION

The third workshop was organized to identify priority activities and establish an agenda for action. Task force groups presented summaries of their work. Based on these reports, participants were asked to vote, to rank in order of highest priority, the activities they felt would best improve their neighborhood. The results of the task force groups and prioritized activities will form the neighborhood's action plan. The action plan will guide the implementation efforts in the reinvestment area by directing allocation decisions and the delivery of city services.

• **What Happened in the Hilltop...**

The meeting, held on March 26th, started with community members taking some time to review reports prepared by each of the task forces. The reports outlined potential activities to address problems identified during earlier workshops.

The meeting was well attended by 70 community members eager to learn about each task force's work. City staff members, each assigned to assist a particular task force group, presented a summary of the group's reports. They were assisted by community members who had worked on the task forces and helped fashion the activities presented.

At times, discussions about the proposed activities became quite lively as participants sought to understand and "fine tune" the recommended activities. After a lengthy session, the report and discussion phase of the workshop ended with some special announcements of upcoming events.

The meeting concluded with participants once again casting "dot votes" to indicate their priority activities — and then sitting down to a well deserved lunch. Several participants signed up to help

organize an open house, where this report and action plan could be presented to the greater community.

PLAN SUMMARY

HOUSING CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Hilltop is a desirable neighborhood with excellent, affordable housing stock, easily accessible to the Columbus' network of interstates as well as the downtown. Many of its residents are second and third generation families, providing stability and a strong sense of community history, spirit, and pride. As one of the "best kept secrets in Columbus," it should come as no surprise that participants gave a high priority to activities directed at improving and maintaining residential housing in the reinvestment area.

Members of the Housing Task Force Group have recommended sharing their area's secrets by actively promoting the neighborhood to its own residents, as well as to the city at large. They also noted that the affordability of housing in the Hilltop, while enhancing the community's marketability, makes it difficult to encourage private improvements or new construction; the cost of these improvements may surpass the appraised value of the property.

Lower property values may also contribute to deferred property maintenance, particularly among rental properties, creating an impression of decline. In addition, the relative affordability of the neighborhood's residential lots and housing may make it economically feasible for some owners to stop investing in their property all together, leaving it vacant and abandoned.

Hilltop residents and community stakeholders have identified a range of activities designed to build community momentum ranging from providing housing rehabilitation loans at reasonable rates and developing programs to make homeowners of tenants, to turning vacant housing into safe, desirable homes.

Folks in the neighborhood know that making the changes happen that they want to see in their community's housing will take some time, creativity, and hard work. But they're ready to roll up their sleeves, meet some more of their neighbors, and get to work. And besides, they know that their efforts won't go unnoticed. After all, many of the "Hilltoppers" in the reinvestment area have been recognized by the Hilltop Civic Council and the Greater Hilltop CDC for the outstanding care they lavish on their homes.

CITY SERVICES

Like many of the older neighborhoods in the central city, residents are very concerned with the condition of their infrastructure and the supportive services they receive from the city of Columbus. Overwhelmingly, participants were concerned with the condition of their alleys and the need for significant improvements in order to alleviate potholes and poor drainage.

In addition, it was generally agreed that conversion by the city Refuse Division to a mechanized collection system using 300 gallon trash containers has been problematic. There are problems with private haulers illegally dumping into the trash containers, the size of the 300 gallon containers relative to the alleys, vandalism and trash collecting on the ground — including trash that falls out of the container during the collection process.

This is not an easy problem to fix. There are strongly held feelings in the community, both in opposition to and in support of, the 300 gallon containers. The city Refuse Division has also made significant investments in the trash containers and mechanized system of collection.

Other problems identified by the community were the conditions of the curbs and streets, and the need for more street trees. It was also felt that cars travel far too fast on their neighborhood streets, presenting a big safety and noise problem. The city of Columbus was felt to be the primary resource for addressing all of these problems. Participants also felt that they were a resource as well, and that they should work in partnership with each other and the city.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Participants expressed their concern about the many challenges facing young people today. Crime, drugs, suicide, peer pressure, poverty, lack of supervision, and limited recreational and job training opportunities are just some of the problems believed to be affecting youth in the reinvestment area — and citywide.

There are programs operating in the community that are geared toward helping young people and their families deal with these problems in whole or in part. And although most of these programs and organizations work against tough odds — low funding, inadequate facilities, and too few staff — they are actively making a difference in the lives of community youth by offering them choices and hope.

Before developing new programs and initiatives, members of the Social Services Task Force felt it important to inventory what is already available in the community. By doing this, they plan to identify the different resources and needs of organizations already serving the community.

The goal of this group is to develop a well coordinated and resourced social service delivery system that will meet community needs. This will involve establishing a more formal relationship between organizations in the Hilltop, as well as with organizations citywide. The Task Force feels certain that they are on the right track. And judging by the votes at the last workshop, they're right.

REGULATIONS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

A lack of code enforcement in the neighborhood contributes to a perception of decline. The presence of deteriorating and vacant buildings is a matter of great concern to area residents. The location of these structures is indiscriminate throughout the neighborhood and they are often located next to well maintained homes. This situation frustrates the efforts of those owners actively caring for and investing in their property. Participants also identified illegal residential businesses, junk cars and commercial vehicles as additional code-related problems in the neighborhood.

At the third workshop, participants voted to create a task force of community representatives to record code violation information. Under the auspices of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission (GHAC), the group will use a standard format to report all housing, zoning, police, and health referrals. By adopting a consistent format and working in partnership with the GHAC, an ongoing tracking mechanism and record of chronic offenders will be created.

SAFETY

Workshop participants felt that, generally speaking, there are too many incidences of crime and violence in the reinvestment area and portions of the community surrounding it. Specifically, they identified crack houses and associated crime and violence as a problem requiring immediate attention.

Concern was also expressed about the manner in which some of the Sullivant Avenue bars are currently being operated. It was felt that some of the bars have become magnets for drug activity, prostitution, and violence. This presents an immediate problem for residents located near Sullivant Avenue; due to the nature of older city areas, many commercial uses are located immediately adjacent to residential homes.

The Safety Task Force Group spent time meeting with representatives of the Columbus Police Division and the city's Anti Crime and Violence Coordinator. Together they drafted a series of activities to address area safety concerns. Identifying "hot spots" of drug and alcohol activity and using enforcement resources to shut them down, was identified as the #1 safety priority.

Activities to assist community members through education, training, local follow-up to criminal reports, reducing the incidences of underage drinking, making it easier to report problems, and

coordination of community wide safety initiatives , also received strong support. It will take a lot of people working together — police, residents, businesses, and community organizations — to get these activities off the drawing board and producing results.

BUSINESS

Although there are some businesses located along Broad Street to the north and Sullivant Avenue to the south, the reinvestment area is primarily residential in nature. This was reflected in the community workshops which enjoyed a high resident turn-out, but had relatively light business participation. Despite this, several business related issues surfaced during the course of the process. And although some of the issues go beyond the scope of the reinvestment effort, they have been include because of their impact on efforts to revitalize Hilltop's older commercial areas.

Surfacing in many of the Task Force Group discussions was community concern about “undesirable” businesses, such as pawn shops, bars, and adult bookstores, locating along Sullivant Avenue. There is a prevailing sense that businesses such as these reflect poorly on the community, attract individuals disposed toward criminal and violent behavior, and make it harder to attract more desirable businesses.

Other issues included poor north-south road access, sparse business owner participation in the reinvestment workshops, and the need to increase the business community's awareness of financial and technical information available through the private and public sectors. Activities were drafted to address some of these concerns — many of which will require cooperative city, county, and federal ventures. In addition, participants may find it beneficial to arrange meetings with reinvestment area businesses to solicit their ideas and participation during the implementation phase.

PLANS FOR ACTION

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Problem**

The reinvestment area is sprinkled with vacant, boarded-up properties and vacant lots. They pose a safety hazard and are a blighting influence in the neighborhood, discouraging reinvestment in neighboring properties. Lack of property maintenance in the neighborhood, particularly among rental properties, creates an impression of decline. In some instances property owners do not have the resources necessary to make repairs and are unaware of the many programs and resources available to help them. Another problem is the scarcity of housing alternatives available to the elderly population, that will allow them to remain in their neighborhood.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ **Activity:** Purchase boarded-up properties through negotiation with property owners for rehabilitation and resale to homeowners.

Activity Leader: Neighborhood CDCs.

√√ **Activity:** Provide a pool of private funds, managed by the Columbus Development Department, for the rehabilitation of housing at lower than market rate interest.

Activity Leader: Private lenders and Columbus Development Department.

√√ **Activity:** Develop programs to convert rental housing to homeowners — targeted to current tenants (lease/purchase).

Activity Leader: CDCs, City of Columbus, and lenders.

√√ **Activity:** Provide and leverage housing rehabilitation loans and grants to low and moderate income households to bring owner-occupied housing units up to code standards.

Activity Leader: Columbus Development Department, neighborhood CDCs, and lenders.

√√ **Activity:** Ascertain the desirability and feasibility of developing elderly housing in the Hilltop, which has none now. Many types of housing should be examined, from small adult care facilities housing two or three people, to the large complexes offering a number of living arrangements from independent to nursing care.

Activity Leader: Hilltop Civic Council, considering the entire Hilltop area, not just the reinvestment area.

- **Additional Activities**

√ **Activity:** Build single family infill housing compatible with the existing character of the neighborhood, and provide renters currently living in the Hilltop first opportunity to purchase, with downpayment assistance.

Activity Leader: City participation with neighborhood CDCs, local lenders, and private developers.

√ **Activity:** Acquire tax delinquent properties for infill development or sale to adjacent property owners for side yards.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department — Land Reutilization Program.**

√ *Activity:* **Provide and leverage funding to rehabilitate rental units occupied by low and moderate income households.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department, neighborhood CDCs, lenders, and private developers.**

√ *Activity:* **Systematic code enforcement to require boarded-up properties to meet city codes regarding condition of building, exterior, and property.**

Activity Leader: **City code enforcement and property owners.**

√ *Activity:* **Secure discounts with area businesses for home maintenance supplies, to be used in tandem with the neighborhood's mobile tool and paint programs.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood CDCs, armed with a letter from the Mayor requesting business participation.**

√ *Activity:* **(a) Pursue an alternative other than demolishing the house at 1936 Fairmont. The house, owned by Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, has been vacant for at least eleven years. The housing authority has determined that it is badly contaminated with lead-based paint and under their regulations may have to be demolished. CMHA has been unable to get clearance from HUD for disposition.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority. The City and the neighborhood may be able to exert pressures on HUD, given the current federal emphasis on barrier removal in revitalization efforts.**

√ *Activity:* **Acquire tax delinquent properties for rehabilitation and sale to potential homeowners. Properties are often boarded-up for long periods of time, sometimes without the payment of taxes. The time allowed to elapse prior to foreclosure should be reasonable.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus — Land Reutilization Program for property acquisition and transfer to neighborhood CDCs. Neighborhood CDCs for rehabilitation and resale for homeownership.**

√ *Activity:* **Provide tax abatements for improvements to existing housing for a specified period of time, for the reasons stated above.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√ *Activity:* **Deferred loans for housing improvements.**

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* **Develop and promote annual neighborhood events.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Civic Council.**

√ *Activity:* **Survey the Hilltop reinvestment area to determine the needs of the elderly population. This information will be used as a sample database for begin a broader approach to the issue of senior housing needs in the Hilltop.**

Activity Leader: Hilltop Civic Council as coordinator. Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging has agreed to provide assistance in developing the survey. The Development Department will mass produce and provide return envelopes. GHCDC will distribute surveys door to door in their "Info Bags".

√ *Activity:* Revise city codes regarding boarded-up housing to reflect a better balance between the individual rights of the property owner and the overall health, safety and welfare of the community. Require a permit to board up property that limits the length of time the property can remain boarded. (Properties boarded up for long periods of time frequently deteriorate and may result in demolition by neglect) Emphasize exterior conditions of structure and site.

Activity Leader: Columbus Development Department.

√ *Activity:* Mow and clean sites if owner is unavailable or unwilling to do so. Assess against property taxes.

Activity Leader: Columbus Environmental Blight Abatement Program.

√ *Activity:* To insure that displacement of neighborhood residents does not occur because of drastic increases in property taxes, cap tax increases in the Hilltop Reinvestment Area at a rate no greater than the citywide average. This insures that neighborhood residents will not be penalized for small improvements in property values that may represent larger percentages of affordable housing prices in the area.

Activity Leader: City of Columbus.

√ *Activity:* Undertake systematic Code Enforcement, in tandem with the various programs, incentives and penalties available to the Hilltop Reinvestment area.

Activity Leader: Columbus Development Department.

√ *Activity:* Educate senior homeowners to the availability of the homesteading tax exemption available to them.

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* Encourage homeownership by providing low interest loans to rehabilitate two-family housing with owner occupant.

Activity Leader: Columbus Development Department.

√ *Activity:* Develop a more business-like approach to the business of rental housing by requiring inspections for code violations at the time of re-leasing.

Activity Leader: Columbus Development Department, and City Council.

√ *Activity:* Mobile Tool and Paint-up programs. Reschedule the Development Department service to a more convenient time (current tool loans are available on Tuesdays from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.) and to a more interior neighborhood location (currently, the truck parks on Broad Street for high visibility). Neighborhood locations have been suggested as follows: Highland Avenue School, Glenwood Recreation Center. City staff have suggested a change of hours to include 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood CDCs and Columbus Development Department.**

√ *Activity:* **Continue neighborhood beautification program, using creative ways to encourage property beautification and upkeep. For example, distribute flats of flowers in the spring, present awards for artistic plantings.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Civic Council.**

√ *Activity:* **Create a clearinghouse of information regarding services and programs available to residents in the Hilltop reinvestment area, particularly elderly housing and service options.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Civic Council.**

√ *Activity:* **As an interim measure, paint boarded-up doors and windows with curtains, flower pots and other creative designs to soften the harshness of the plywood. The activity could be done by art classes in the schools, or as a special neighborhood or church project, working with the property owner.**

Activity Leader: **Property owners and neighborhood organizations.**

√ *Activity:* **Provide information about revitalization programs in the community.**

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* **Arrange for Public Service Announcements on radio, TV, touting the accomplishments of the Hilltop reinvestment area, and promoting homeownership opportunities.**

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* **Contract with a reliable person to provide services for groups of senior citizens. Services could include window washing, yard maintenance, gutter cleaning, sidewalk patching, driveway repair, etc. Contracting for these services in this manner will reassure seniors who might otherwise be leery of hiring someone.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Civic Council.**

√ *Activity:* **Participate with lenders in distributing information about their central city neighborhood programs.**

Activity Leader: **Lenders, neighborhood organizations, and CDCs.**

√ *Activity:* **Develop infill guidelines to ensure compatibility of new construction with existing neighborhood character. Emphasize compatibility elements such as cornice height, setback, and facade orientation rather than “historical” character.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Design Center.**

√ *Activity:* **Streamline development process, waive fees when possible for single family infill.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department.**

√ **Activity:** Provide tax abatement for infill housing for a specified period of time (5 to 10 years). During this time, continue to tax the land but not the value of the improvements, providing an incentive for the new construction without the loss of current tax revenues. The improvements to the land will stabilize property values in the neighborhood, thus contributing to the long term tax values.

Activity Leader: City of Columbus.

√ **Activity:** Develop programs to take advantage of outlet and deep discount items, for example, Homes on the Hill CDC's partnership with Gifts In Kind, a program where mislabeled or overstocked items are available at very low cost plus shipping.

Activity Leader: Neighborhood CDCs.

√ **Activity:** Request that Channel 3 film the Hilltop Public Workshop and develop a series on community reinvestment areas.

Activity Leader:

√ **Activity:** Develop a partnership with Channel 10 under their "Time to Care" program, promoting the reinvestment area successes in the Hilltop.

Activity Leader:

√ **Activity:** Secure pro bono advertising services to advise on marketing strategies for the neighborhood. Spend money on advertising if overall strategies so indicate.

Activity Leader:

√ **Activity:** Form a partnership with Columbus Christmas in April to rehabilitate housing for seniors.

Activity Leader:

√ **Activity:** Utilize the GHCDC "Info Bag" system to distribute information about programs and city services.

Activity Leader: GHCDC and service providers, for example, Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging.

CITY SERVICES

- **Problem**

The alleys in the area are in poor condition. They do not drain properly, water pools on the surface, collects for long periods of time in pot holes, and/or drains into garages. The current system of refuse collection in older city areas was also felt to be problematic. The current system relies on the mechanized collection of trash from 300 gallon containers. Problems reported were that the containers are too large, hard to clean, smell, are often vandalized, and trash collects around them. Other concerns cited by the community were the condition of the streets, crumbling curbs, and the need for more street trees. In addition, participants were very concerned about the amount and speed of traffic on their residential streets.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ **Activity:** (a) Repair the alleys in the reinvestment area to eliminate drainage and pothole problems. Survey the alleys to determine the extent of these problems and

regrade and/or resurface to repair as appropriate. (b) Regularly monitor the alleys and provide ongoing maintenance.

Activity Leader: The City of Columbus for regular maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

√√ *Activity:* The Refuse Division plans to survey the city for chronic problem areas, and set up an appropriate system of refuse collection to address these areas. Under this system, bulk pick-up will occur every three weeks (except under conditions when residential collection is delayed, as in extremely cold weather). Refrigerants will be picked up by private haulers.

Activity Leader: Columbus Refuse Division.

√ *Activity:* Conduct a review of the 300 gallon trash can system to determine its effectiveness in the Hilltop and other older city neighborhoods. Depending on the results, some areas may change to 90 gallon containers.

Activity Leader: Columbus Refuse Division, and community residents with 300 gallon containers.

√ *Activity:* Survey the area to determine specific areas of need for (1) curb replacement, (2) street repair and resurfacing, and (3) street trees.

Activity Leader: City of Columbus.

√ *Activity:* Illegally dumped items: survey of chronic problem area and system of pick-up.

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* City police intermittently monitor automobile traffic on residential streets and ticket speeders.

Activity Leader: Columbus Police Division.

√ *Activity:* Minimize and/or eliminate damage to alleys from operation of garbage trucks driving down sides of alleys to reach and empty 300 gallon trash containers. Large, muddy, water filled ruts are created down trash can side of alley by trucks picking up garbage.

√ *Activity Leader:* City of Columbus. Discuss alley improvements with Refuse Division to explore resurfacing program that would reduce and/or eliminate damage to alleys caused by garbage trucks.

√ *Activity:* Conduct a traffic study of residential street system to determine feasible ways of eliminating heavy, "cut-through" traffic from neighborhood streets.

Activity Leader: Columbus Traffic and Engineering Division.

√ *Activity:* Clean the garbage cans, especially targeting the summer months when the odors and conditions are at their worst.

Activity Leader: Columbus Refuse Division (using summer workers?)

√ *Activity:* Educate the public on the proper use of the 300-gallon containers. The Refuse Division is being a program to work with civic groups, area commissions, and block watch groups to develop an effective education campaign. They are considering distributing written educational information in water bills, through a direct mail campaign and use of neighborhood newspapers. The campaign will start late Spring, early Summer 1994.

Activity Leader: Columbus Refuse Division.

√ *Activity:* The Refuse Division is planning to hire three solid waste inspectors citywide to work with Health Department personnel to address refuse and health code violations, using procedures of warning (giving the property owner time to clean the area), citations and environmental court. The program should be in place by the summer of 1992. These resources should be targeted as much as possible to the Hilltop CRA.

Activity Leader: Columbus Refuse Division.

SOCIAL SERVICES

- **Problem**

There are too many youth hanging out on neighborhood streets with nothing constructive to do. They represent a variety of ages and for the most part, are not engaged in organized, supervised activities. Participants felt that there needs to be more recreation and enrichment programs available to area young people. They also felt that it was difficult for working parents to secure safe, supervised day care for their children that is affordable and flexible to accommodate today's diverse work schedules. Another problem cited was the need for more social programs geared to the needs and interests of the elderly. Many felt that the seniors in the neighborhood have much to offer and that opportunities to sharing their life and work experiences would benefit the whole community.

- **Priority Activity**

√ *Activity:* Develop a well-resourced (funds, goods, services, and people) and coordinated system of partnerships. The partnership system will have the capacity to deliver consumer-driven child care, day care, after school, education, training, recreational and community service activities that will reduce the risks Hilltop youth are facing. Two levels of interdependent partnerships are proposed: (a) Neighborhood-based Partners and (b) Community-wide Partners. A task force of key partners within and serving the reinvestment area will be established, known as the Hilltop Community Reinvestment Area Social Services Task Force. Within 6 months, the group will (1) develop the two levels of partnership, insuring a primary emphasis on youth and parent involvement in the entire process; (2) establish a shared vision/mission for both levels of partnerships; (3) develop common agreed upon goals and objectives; (?) create activities for implementation; (5) establish formal and informal communication and coordination agreements — both within and between the two partnership levels; (6) Obtain resources to implement planned activities; and (7) implement.

Activity Leader: Hilltop CRA Social Services Task Force, Neighborhood-based Partners: parents; social service agencies, eg., St. Aloysius, J. Ashburn Youth Center, and Hilltop Civic Council, etc.; businesses; schools; religious institutions; civic organizations; recreation centers; library; Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.; Y.M.C.A.; police and fire stations, and Community-wide Partners: Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (ADAMH); Franklin County Children's Services; Franklin County Human Services; Action for Children; United Way; Safety — police and fire; Ohio Youth Services Bureau.

REGULATIONS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

- **Problem**

Some properties in the reinvestment area are not being maintained to code standard, which erodes the overall quality of life in the community and furthers a perception of neighborhood decline. Examples of this problem include deteriorating and vacant buildings, illegal residential buildings, such as car repair shops in neighborhood garages, junk cars, and commercial vehicles on the streets and alleys.

- **Priority Activity**

✓ *Activity:* **Create a task force of community representatives under the auspices of the Greater Hilltop Civic Association to make code enforcement referrals to the city. Using a special referral form, the community creates its own record of chronic offenders and an ongoing tracking mechanism. In addition, the city will provide the commission with computer printouts of existing cases as requested.**

Activity Leader: **Greater Hilltop Area Commission task force and city code enforcement officer. This activity may require the addition of a new code enforcement officer to handle the increased work load with the current officer.**

SAFETY

- **Problem**

Over the years, the reinvestment area, and adjacent older city neighborhoods have seen an increase in criminal activity. Participant felt that the existence of crack houses and the attendant criminal and violent incidents that follow this activity, is one of the biggest problems facing their community.

Having illegal drug trafficking in the neighborhood makes residents feel unsafe and can substantially limit ones ability to enjoy their home and community. The “girlie” bars along Sullivant Avenue are a problem as well, because of the prostitution solicitation, drug activity, and violence that these businesses attract. In addition, participants felt that police response time to crime reports has not been as fast as they feel is adequate.

- **Priority Activities**

✓ *Activity:* **Identify drug and violence “hot spots” by citizen reports and Police records, especially crack houses; mobilize enforcement resources to shut them down; and use asset forfeiture civil court action to supplement criminal actions. Joint meetings between Police jurisdictions and the Safety Task Force have resulted in a commitment by Patrol Command Officers, Narcotics Bureau, and Code enforcement to cooperate in a concentrated, coordinated effort to close down the most blatant drug “hot spots” by mobilizing Operation ACE, Patrol walking team, SCAT team, and Narcotics aids. Education of citizens on how and what to report to best assist enforcement will be provided in meetings with Police.**

Activity Leader: **Safety Task Force, Columbus Police Division, Code Enforcement, Citizen Involvement, and Hilltop Civic Council. Police alone cannot eradicate the “hot spots” without active involvement by area residents. The Safety Task Force will assist in engaging citizens in an effort to strengthen the partnership with police, educate citizens on reporting, and solicit help from area civic groups. The VISTA volunteers can help coordinate activities and provide educational support. The crime prevention resource center services will support the effort.**

√ *Activity:* Create a Community Crime Prevention Resource Center in the neighborhood. The center would become a clearinghouse of crime prevention resource material and education to assist residents and area organizations in fostering safer conditions, providing a wide range of educational programs, assisting residents with follow-up on crime problems, targeting special initiatives for youth and senior citizens, and establishing a “community partnership” location with high police visibility and presence. Hilltop Civic Council has submitted a grant application to the Alliance for Cooperative Justice to establish such a Center. The Safety Task Force would become an Advisory Council to the program to guide development of specific initiatives. Grant application requests \$55,000 with \$20,000 in federal money and \$15,000 required match which the Task Force recommends be designated from Community Reinvestment Area funds.

Activity Leader: Hilltop Civic Council, Safety Task Force, and Columbus Development Department (tie into Vista Project). With the concurrence of the reinvestment area planning body, the Safety Task Force wishes to become an ongoing citizen-based entity to assist in engaging area citizens and organizations in the effort to create safer conditions and to act as an advocacy group.

√ *Activity:* Establish a pilot project to bring Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and Courts to the neighborhood for intake and complaint filing. Citizens report that the time and “hassle factor” of going downtown to file complaints is a barrier to effective, consistent follow-up on crime. Many incidents are never reported and no criminal action is taken against offenders.

Activity Leader: Safety Task Force, Columbus Police Division, and ????. An approach needs to be made to Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and Clerk of Courts Office as to how best to proceed.

√ *Activity:* Target the problem bars for special programs by VISTA volunteers to conduct Alcohol Beverage Server education and coordinate efforts with Columbus Police to bring liquor permit revocation proceedings through the Ohio Department of Liquor Control for those serving to underage drinkers. A special education program called TIPS training is available for use with alcohol beverage servers to sensitize them to responsible decisions about serving people who drink to excess. VISTA volunteers have access to the training and can conduct sessions for area establishments.

Activity Leader: VISTA project and Hilltop Civic Council.

- **Additional Activities**

√ *Activity:* Assign two VISTA volunteers from the City of Columbus project to Hilltop with a focus on crime and violence program development. The VISTA project of the Columbus Planning Division has volunteers working full time in neighborhoods to support crime and violence reduction activities; Hilltop Civic Council has agreed to be a supervising agency for two volunteers who will be placed in the area by April ?, 1992. VISTA’s will be trained in crime prevention and violence reduction skills to assist the neighborhood in developing its safety initiatives and coordinating efforts with Columbus Police, with a special priority on supporting the proposed crime prevention resource center.

Activity Leader: Hilltop Civic Council, Safety Task Force, VISTA project, and Columbus Planning Division. The VISTA project will have eight new volunteers completing initial training by April 4, 1994. Two of these volunteers will be assigned to Hilltop area. The

VISTA grant has been restructured to focus on crime and violence in Columbus neighborhoods. Volunteers will be available to assist and foster citizen efforts to identify strengths, define priority concerns, and develop plans to reduce crime and violence. Comprehensive neighborhood programs of crime prevention and violence reduction education, community organization, resource development, victims assistance, and partnership building will be developed working through neighborhood-based supervising agencies like Hilltop Civic Council and with the Safety Task Force as an Advisory Council.

√ *Activity:* Establish the Safety Task Force as a coordinating body to guide and mobilize the community partnership with enforcement entities and related neighborhood service providers. Utilize the Safety Task Force to promote citizen participation in activities such as Block Watch, Citizen Crime Patrols, Town Meetings, educational programs, etc.

Activity Leader: Safety Task Force, Columbus Police Division, service providers, and citizens.

√ *Activity:* Develop a series of “Town Meetings” in the neighborhood for residents to meet and dialogue with police — establish personal connection between police and residents. Engage the assistance of civic organizations in planning and conducting the meetings. Promote attendance by developing engaging written meeting announcement flyers, word of mouth, and advertising. Hold meetings at a facility in the neighborhood, such as an area church, Glenwood Recreation Center, Highland School, J. Ashburn Junior Youth Center, etc.

Activity Leader: Hilltop Safety Task Force and Columbus Police Division. The Safety Task Force is willing to become an ongoing entity with the mission of facilitating and supporting activities to promote safer conditions in the neighborhood and coordinate efforts among the various organizations who need to be involved.

√ *Activity:* Establish a more effective ongoing linking and coordinating initiative with area organizations, service providers, grassroots citizen groups, and enforcement to address crime/violence concerns. The Safety Task Force in conjunction with Hilltop Civic Council and the VISTA project are willing to take on the task of better coordination and linkage with civic groups, businesses, business associations, area churches, social service agencies, schools, planning bodies, etc. to reduce area crime and violence while avoiding duplication of effort. A concerted effort will be more effective in maximizing scarce resources and in developing neighborhood capability to sustain the gains to be made through the partnerships created.

Activity Leader:

√ *Activity:* Bring Nuisance Abatement actions against establishments who are chronic problems with prostitution and drug activity; successful actions result in closing the place for one year. Nuisance Abatement actions require cooperation among police, code enforcement, and area residents to establish that a public nuisance exists which can be a cause for court action to close the place down. Citizen reports and enforcement history are needed to establish a case.

Activity Leader: Columbus Police Division, VISTA volunteers, citizens, and Safety Task Force.

BUSINESS

- **Problem**

There are too many undesirable businesses in the neighborhood, such as pawn shops, adult bookstores, and bars, and the community feels a lack of control over the situation. Very few business owners participated in the reinvestment workshops and many of the activities identified lack their input. Other problems include limited off-street parking spaces along Sullivant Avenue and Broad Street, poor north-south access, and a need to make more business owners aware of financial and technical assistance programs.

- **Priority Activities**

I. Undesirable Businesses

√ **Activity One: Regulate the proximity of undesirable businesses to residential areas in the Hilltop area.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus working with community residents to revise the zoning code.**

√ **Activity Two: Explore a collaborative effort between state and city to restrict the number of liquor permits allowed in an area.**

Activity Leader: **State of Ohio and City of Columbus.**

II. Transportation Access

√ **Activity One: Study extending Grandview Avenue from McKinley Avenue to West Broad Street.**

Activity Leader: **State of Ohio and City of Columbus.**

√ **Activity Two: Study extension of Hague Avenue to Clime Road.**

Activity Leader: **Franklin County and City of Columbus.**

√ **Activity Three: Study feasibility of connector from North Hague Avenue to I-70.**

Activity Leader: **State of Ohio, Franklin County, and City of Columbus.**

III. Business Information and Assistance

√ **Activity One: Providing information about existing programs and resources available to business owners.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and Hilltop Business Association.**

√ **Activity Two: Target the Broad Street commercial area adjacent to the Reinvestment Area for resources available through federal, state, and local programs.**

Activity Leader: **State of Ohio and City of Columbus.**

√ **Activity Three: Provide additional capital improvements such as street lighting, trees, trash can, and curbs along West Broad from Lechner Avenue to**

Highland Avenue and along Sullivant from Columbian Avenue to Wheatland Avenue.

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

IV. Business Owner Participation

√ *Activity One:* **Recruit businesses for participation in neighborhood activities.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Business Association and neighborhood CDCs.**

V. Insufficient Parking

√ *Activity One:* **Develop additional parking spaces.**

Activity Leader: **Hilltop Business Association and neighborhood CDCs working jointly could encourage businesses to share parking spaces and/or create policy relating to common parking lots.**

NEXT STEPS

People working together to make things happen is nothing new on the Hilltop. Community members have a long history of pulling together in times of adversity and working together to support community events and celebrations.

The reinvestment workshops benefited from this civic spirit and from the different perspective that each individual brought to the process. This report and the activities outlined, serve to further emphasize that this is a community that believes strongly in itself and its future. The next steps will be very important. It is a lot easier to rally around something when the results and sense of accomplishment happen quickly; it is much harder to maintain excitement and momentum for the “long haul” projects.

It is going to take a lot of work, creativity, and momentum to lift the activities outlined in this report “off the pages” and into real results. To assist with this the Development Department, Neighborhood Development Division has made a three year commitment to work with each of the reinvestment areas on implementation activities.

Now that Hilltop I & II have identified and set priorities on what they want to do, Neighborhood Development will begin working with community members to adapt existing programs, or to develop new programs as needed, to get the results desired. The success of community reinvestment efforts in the Hilltop I & II area will depend on the ongoing commitment of community members, local organizations, and the city. If the workshops are any indication, it is safe to say that we are all off to a good start.

THANK YOU

The success of the reinvestment workshops is directly attributable to the active participation of community members living and working in the Hilltop. Many other individuals and organizations played a supporting role by helping to organize for the workshops, facilitating discussion groups, providing technical expertise, distributing information, and making sure that the coffee pot was always on.

Workshop and Task Force Participants

Mary K. Arensbuerg	Don Jenifer *
Florence Atkinson	Laurenceen Jennings
Drueton Bagley	Lois A. Latscha
Mary Barton	Hubert Lindsey
Wida Belk	Katrina Mason
Carl Brauner *	William McElfresh
Sylvia Brown	Cathy McGowan
Errol Bueche	Pat McLean *
Wheeler and Betty Burley	Cecil C. Mickens, Sr.
Diana buskiek	Ovorn Miller
Alina Butler *	Donald Minney
Dalton Butler, Jr.	T.R. Minton
Babs Carfrey *	Keith Morefield
Bonnie Carter	Ronald Newsome
Emma J. Carter	Anna Palmore
Manu Chabria	Matt Perrenod
Homer Christian	John Pettibone
Suzanne Christian	Charles Pfaltzgraf *
Pamela B. Coles	Earls Potts *
Sam and Wilda Calloway	Rod Pritchard
William Colwell	Warren Rayder *
Octavia Cornute	Roxanne Reid
Herceal Craig *	Carmen Reid
Dave Daubert *	Marc A. Ridgeway
Susan Delay	Jennie Robson
Laurenceen Dennings	Jaymes Saunders *
Jakki Dula	David Scarberry
Don DeVere	Duane and Jean Scott
Betty Edwards	Steve and Linda Skunza *
Ernest L. Edwards	Earl Smith
Donald E. Fleuellen	Vick Stroud
Dean Francis *	Dan Trittschuh
Carolyn Gallion	Andy Turner
Wayne Gatewood	Pam Weaver *
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Betty and Charles Gooch	Ann Welch
Peggy Gooch *	Frank and Jessie Wigfall
Peggy Gordon	George Williams
Bill Harper	Melva C. Williams Augaw
Pat Hartman	Richard Wilson
Frances Haynes	Bettie L. Wortin
William Hinga	Denise Wren
Lisa Hoffman	Doug Zelinski
Denny Huebner *	
Clarence E. Jackson*	

* organizational committee

Workshop and Task Force Facilitators

Janine Aeh	Jan Elias
Bob Armstrong	Darren H. Harder
David Baker	Boni Lautenschuetz
Mike Bartley	Nicky Leppert
Loral Baudro	Steve McClary
Roxyanne Burrus	Nan Merritt
Jack Butler	Dick Ritchie
Beth Clark	Melissa Schneider
Bill Courson	Steve Tweed
Sue Cummings	Dave Younger

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Loral Baudro, Neighborhood Planner
Grace Ashby, Graphic Designer
Dick Ritchie, Neighborhood Planning Manager
Daniel Thomas, Urban Design Manager

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